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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that changes in educational administration in Poland must be seen in the context of the enormous social and political changes that have occurred in that country in recent years. Centralized bureaucratic planning of social and economic programs has been discarded. The changes have impacted the system of educational administration and management in the form of increased autonomy for schools. It has been seen as necessary to increase the autonomy of schools and other educational institutions, bearing in mind that it is not only teachers, parents, educators, and other adults, but also pupils who ought to join in the development of the educational organization of each particular school. The paper concludes that while changes in the system of educational administration have tended toward decentralization and socialization, the authority of the central government should be preserved for the initiation and supervision of measures related to educational priorities. (DB)

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DIRECTIONS OF CHANGE IN THE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

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Mirosław Szymański

Directions of Change in the System of Educational Administration in the Republic of Poland

Since the beginning of the eighties efforts aimed at total political, social and economic change have been undertaken in Poland. They were made possible by the broad social movement that was centred around the trade union "Solidarity", by the storm of protests against maladministration and discredited government, by the fight for the real autonomy and freedom of the nation. Much attention has been paid to the economic situation of the country. The socialist model of economy prevailing after the Second World War has not created conditions suitable for economic development. On the contrary, economic crisis spread throughout the country and the remnants of the Stalinist political mechanisms restricted social and cultural development. All this was in conflict with the actual needs of the people, while national traditions and the quality of education, culture and science provided a solid basis for the realization of goals similar to those highly developed countries set themselves.

Although Poland, as the leading country in Eastern Europe in terms of the implementation of democratic change, had been a focus of international interest for many years, it was only in 1989 that a decisive change occurred. First of all the "round-table" talks were held, in which representatives of the main political groups - often opposed to each other - tried to reach agreement on the most urgent needs and strategies for further development of the country. The "round-table" talks were followed by general elections and the formation of a so-

cially acceptable Parliament (consisting of two chambers: the Sejm and the Senate). Next the government was formed, the first one since 1945 to represent practically the whole of Polish society. The government drew up a new socio-economic programme aimed at social democratization, at making all citizens a part of the social process and at carrying out far-reaching economic changes. It has been decided to give up centralized bureaucratic planning. It has also become necessary to give up the system of central management conceived as a centralized system of directives and distribution. Market economy methods, successfully applied in highly developed countries, are now being implemented in Poland.

Radical changes of this type must have influenced the system of educational administration and management. Social and economic changes have resulted in a need for the increased autonomy of schools. Moreover, external changes determine directions of change occurring within the school. For instance, the increased autonomy that can be seen in institutions, social organizations and local communities requires the school to become a self-governed institution as well, for this is the only place in which pupils can gain the experience they will find necessary when they receive the right to make their own decisions.

Up until now the system of educational administration has been strongly centralized and every school has - directly or indirectly - been subordinated to the Ministry of National Education or - in the case of some vocational schools - to other ministries. The Minister of National Education implemented central education policy directives through local education authorities in 49 voivodships, municipalities and local council

4. Great restriction of the headmaster's authority, reducing his role to that of merely performing administrative and executive tasks. In practice this meant lack of freedom, independence and initiative on the part of headmasters. Their function became less attractive, which resulted in inappropriat selection.

5. A faulty system of salaries in education. The allocation of too few funds to education from the state budget caused a decrease in the real value of teachers' pay, as compared with that of other professions. Signs of teachers' impoverishment appeared here and there and, consequently, this occupation became less and less attractive, especially for men. The salary system provided no incentives - the best teachers were not rewarded and the worst teachers were not paid any less.

The educational policy that is now being implemented aims at a thorough change of the principles underlying the system of schooling. Connected with this, too, are changes in the system of educational administration.

It has been taken for granted that the most important educational influence occurs within the family and at school, as well as in non-school institutions that carry out systematic educational activity. In this connection it is necessary to increase the autonomy of schools and other educational institutions, bearing in mind that it is not only teachers, parents, educators and other adults, but also pupils who ought to join in the development of the educational organization of each particular school. Thus the autonomy of schools, pupils and teachers is being developed. Parents are given an opportunity

to establish private, or so-called social, schools. They may do this on the condition that they present a well-developed programme and ensure the conditions necessary for the proper functioning of the school.

The education authorities recognize the right of teachers to choose their own methods of instruction, handbooks and other educational resources.

Headmasters and staff are given greater autonomy as regards curricula and syllabuses. It is up to each particular school whether certain subjects will be taught (this chiefly concerns foreign languages). Teachers are allowed to modify existing curricula, or implement curricula devised by themselves, on the condition they are approved by the education authorities.

In connection with the new law on local government and state administration that is now being prepared, a new concept of education administration is being devised. The Ministry of National Education suggests sharing the responsibility for education among local authorities and education administration units in a completely new way.

The local government authorities will maintain kindergartens, primary schools and other educational institutions of local significance. They will be responsible for school attendance within their area. They will be entitled to employ and dismiss teachers and appoint headmasters in those schools and educational institutions for which they are responsible.

It is expected that educational administration will be separated from general administration. At the voivodship level, state education administration will be represented by a school superintendent, appointed by the Minister of National Education and directly responsible to him. The school superintendents

will be responsible for the following within their respective areas:

- educational supervision over all the schools and educational institutions,
- inspection to see that area authorities obey the law and adhere to the educational policy of the government,
- supervision of the school network,
- distribution of funds granted by the Minister of National Education from those allocated to education from the state budget.

With the purpose of regaining educational autonomy, the following measures are expected in the nearest future:

- the setting-up of a Council for Curriculum Development at the Ministry of National Education; the Council's duty will be to devise minimum curricular requirements, to approve textbooks and to advise on educational innovations;
- the establishing of educational councils at voivodship, municipality and district levels; their task will be to give advice on all important educational decisions within their area;
- the setting-up of a school council within each educational institution (school or non-school); members of the school council will be representatives of the teachers, parents, local authorities and - in post-primary schools - pupils as well.

Summing up, changes in the system of education administration tend towards the decentralization and socialization of educational decisions, while at the same time the authority of the central government will be preserved as regards initiating, stimulating and supervising measures related to educational priorities.